

**MINUTES OF THE OF THE SCHOOLS' FORUM
HELD ON 20 MARCH 2018
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, BARKING
(10:00am – 12:00pm)**

Present: School Representatives

Primary School Representatives

Brian Fox	HT, Roding Primary School
Scott Halliwell (Joint Chair)	HT, Southwood Primary School
Jayne Meech	HT, Village Infants School
Martin Nicholson	HT, Grafton Primary School
Richard November	HT, Valence Primary School
Julie Philips	HT, Godwin Primary School
Paramjit Roopra	HT, Northbury Primary School

Secondary School Representative

Ges Smith	HT, Jo Richardson Community School
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Governor Representatives

David Dickson	HT, Eastbury Community School
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Academy / Free Schools

Andrew Roberts	HT, Riverside School
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Academy Special School Representative

Roger Leighton (Joint Chair)	Chief Executive, Partnership Learning
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Special Needs Representative

Susan Ball	HT, Trinity School
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Non-School Representatives

John Trow Smith	Early Years Representative
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Head of Specialist Alternative Provision

Annie Blackmore	HT, Mayesbrook School (PRU)
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Trade Union Representative

Dominic Byrne	NUT
John McGill	NASUWT

Also present: Jane Hargreaves, Commissioning Director – Education
 Patricia Harvey – Senior Professional, High Needs Block
 Daksha Chauhan – Group Accountant – Local Authority Finance
 Katherine Heffernan – Group Manager – Local Authority Finance and Investment
 Shaj Sivadasan – Principal Accountant, Schools - Local Authority Finance
 Councillor Evelyn Carpenter – Cabinet Member Education and Schools
 Ronan Fox – Joint Children’s Commissioner for Barking and Dagenham
 Nichola Young – Local Authority Minute Clerk

MINUTES

Mr Scott Halliwell (SH) chaired the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Daniel Craft – HT, St Peters Catholic School
 Janis Davies – HT, Sydney Russell School
 Yvonne Kelly – 14-19 Representative
 Jo Tupman – HT, Barking Abbey School

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Roger Leighton – Schools Facing Financial Difficulty

3.

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018 were confirmed as an accurate record

3.2 Actions from 17 October 2017

2.2 DC to review the constitution. Annual elections of chair and co-chairs, co-chairs works well so will be included in constitution; DC will prepare a draft for distribution – this is deferred to the June meeting.

Action DC

3.8 End of Year balances - Pat Harvey (PH) stated that it may be useful to provide SF with an update on schools’ spending plans, what they have committed and what the final balances are. Schedule to include committed and uncommitted spend of balances. This will be taken forward as part of 2017/18 closure reporting.

Action DC

4.2.1 The issue of falling pupil numbers is being picked up by the sub group for pupil place planning – covered in the agenda

Complete

4.2.2 Schools’ Forum to consider how the growth fund can be used to support the exceptional cases (falling rolls) given the pressures in having to fund expanding classes – covered in the agenda

- 4.3 High Needs Block - review vacant places and link – covered in the report from the High Needs Block

Complete

- 4.4 John Trow Smith enquired about details of the campaign relating to 30 hours. JTS to contact Rikki Damsgaard – Rikke provided JTS with the following information - banner advertising across the borough, banner advertising outside of participating settings, regular social media, a video for the Vicarage Fields roadshow at the end of January and continuing distribution of leaflets and posters. SF requested an update on numbers for the take up of 30 hours.

Action JB

- 3.3 Noted, Brian Fox provided SF with an update on the Apprenticeship Levy. A meeting took place with Coventry University to see what the options were, on the 13 March 2018 with a tutor from the university to try and progress the Apprenticeship Levy. There is hope to get something in place for September using the Apprenticeship Levy.

4.

REPORT FROM THE GROUP ACCOUNTANT - FINANCE**2. Dedicated Schools Grant 2018-18 Outturn Position after adjustments**

- 2.1 Noted, the Early Years Block is reporting an underspend of £845k. There is a projected underspend on the funding of 3 and 4-year olds which has not been factored into the forecast and will be adjusted by the DfE in June 2018.
- 2.2 Noted, the High Needs Block is forecasting an overspend of £1.3m
- 2.3 Noted, Schools Block are reporting a breakeven position.
- 2.4 Noted, the 2017-18 budget is £211,386m, the 2017-18 Forecast Outturn is £211,841. This will result in an overspend of £455k.
- 2.5 Noted, Scott Halliwell (SH) queried what the reserves are. DC responded that it leaves £2m.
- 2.6 Noted, underspend on 3 and 4year olds is not reported as it is clawed back by the DfE. Based on FTE equivalents.
- 2.7 Noted, DC informed SF that it was evident from the NFF exemplifications that LBBB High Needs Block is under-funded. The need has been acknowledged in the NFF, but there is a gains cap is applied by the formula to smooth out the impact of its implementation. It may take 3 to 4 years before the full funding amount is received. Funding will also increase year on year to take into account population increases.
- 2.8 Noted, it was recommended to note that the overspend in the High Needs Block relates to an increase in demand, please see breakdown below: -

- A projected overspend of £318k from on Alternative Provisions largely due to a £102k pressure on Home Tuition Service and £190k for Top for Alternative provision pupils;
- The primary and secondary school ARPs is forecasting an overspend of £384k as a result of an increase in demand;
- The Primary Respite and 6th day care is forecasting an underspend of £397k, resulting from the delays in the start of the service;
- A £301k underspend on Placement and Out of Borough Top Ups – Jane Hargreaves stated that you cannot rely on not placing children out anymore, other strategies need to be looked at;
- The special school Post 16 (Trinity and Barking and Dagenham) is forecasting a projected pressure of £333k;
- The special school Pre-16 is forecasting a projected pressure of £454k as a result of increases in demand;
- There is a projected £510k overspend on SEN Contingency (In Borough Top-Ups) due to demographic pressures with an increasing number of pupils with SEN requirements.

3. Schools Facing Financial Difficulty Update

- 3.1 Noted, Appendix A provides an update on the profile of payments due and balances at the end of each year.
- 3.2 Noted, the 2017-18 in-year loan repayments of £443k, taking into account the 16/17 carry forward balance of £147k – the overall position on the contingency will be a surplus of £ 590k.
- 3.3 Noted, Barking Abbey have agreed to use their Exceptional Growth Fund money to make a further repayment on their loan.
- 3.4 Noted, JH informed SF that there have been no formal requests to the Schools Facing Financial Difficulty board, they are however aware of several schools who are looking to be in deficit.

4. Falling Rolls

SH provided SF with a verbal update on Falling Roles.

- 4.1 Noted, a working party has been created. Initially the group met with Joy Barter around nursery but was complete after 2 or 3 meetings. The group has now started to look at reception with Andy Carr and Lisa O'Dwyer from Admissions.
- 4.2 Noted, there is an expected drop in reception places in 2018-19 as per 2017-18.

- 4.3 Noted, the group have identified four concern areas:
1. Pupil on roll in the Barking area – where building work is going on, drop in numbers will reverse
 2. The Leys and Beam – again there is building work going on, drop in number is expected to reverse
 3. Goresbrook area – some schools in this area have been reporting falling rolls for three years. Reduced numbers in reception, year 1 and year 2.
 4. Parsloes area – similar concerns to Goresbrook
- 4.4 Noted, JH informed SF that Andy Carr and Lisa O'Dwyer are having discussions with individual Headteachers regarding the opening up of certain classes in September.
- 4.6 Noted, DfE are discussing with local authorities on how changes in pupil numbers (falling rolls) as well as the growth fund should be managed within the Schools Block Formula. The DfE are collating issues.
- 4.7 Noted, pupil numbers or additional pupils joining schools (growth) between October after census and July is unfunded.
- 4.8 Noted, SF suggested that it may be useful to provide some funding support to vulnerable schools using strict criteria.
- 4.8.1 Noted, DC recommended that the Falling Rolls subgroup look at the criteria that should be applied during the next meeting in May. DC informed SF that she had listed some of the DfE criteria that can be used for Falling Rolls. SF responded saying that the upcoming meeting in May will be looking at demand and that it is best to discuss the criteria with DC and report back to SF.
- Action SH**
- 4.8.2 Noted, JH suggested that SH model the criteria on 2 to 3 schools and how it will have an impact on them over three years if nothing is done.
- Action SH/DC**
- 4.9 Noted, SH informed SF that there will be strict criteria for schools to meet in order to be eligible for this grant. David Dickson (DD) asked as to whether it is possible for information to be published so that everything is transparent and that schools are named and that the criteria has been met. SH and DC responded saying that this would become a part of the modelling and would come back to SF.
- 4.10 **Decision** - Schools Forum are asked to approve limited funding support for falling rolls from the SFFD fund. This would be via a one-off grant.
- Agreed**
- 4.10 Noted, SH circulated a note to SF on Primary funding from LBBB Primary Headteachers, please see below:

'Primary Headteachers in Barking and Dagenham are very concerned about the current and near future funding as presented to this forum.

Many of us are going to be in a dire situation in the financial year 2018-19 and even more are projecting a real deficit for 2019-20 if current factors remain.

Primary schools have delivered a consistent increase in standards over the past few years – using money allocated wisely in challenging circumstances of rapid expansion and increased pupil need, primary Heads see an inevitable decline in standards across the board in EYFS, KS1 and KS2 over the next few years as the impact of cuts now start to take effect.

We will be researching options and seeking clearer information as to why the current national funding factors appear to impact Primary schools in Barking and Dagenham so badly and will table this in time for our panel meeting in June.'

- 4.11 Noted, DC stated that main driver in the reduced funding is that National Funding Formula factors were used to allocate funding and the AWPU rates had to be flexed to get to a ratio of 1:1.43.
- 4.12 Noted, SH stated that an investigation needs to be undertaken to investigate why national factors affect the Primaries so much more.
- 4.13 Noted, DD asked that the information be circulated a few weeks before the June SF meeting.
- 4.14 Noted, JTS asked as to whether it was advisable to revisit what is currently being done to pre-secure consent from families who are participating in the 2 year old-offer, who are likely to be eligible for Early Years pupil premium and Primary Pupil premium.

5. High Needs Block

- 5.1 Noted, there is an existing pressure of £1.3m within the HNB
- 5.2 Noted, an initial proposal was put forward at the HNB working group to deduct 4% from all SEN top-up payments for one year. After further explorations and discussions, the 4% was deemed to be excessive and it was agreed by SF to initially deduct 2% on all SEN top-ups. A review on the impact of the 2% reduction will take place at the June SF meeting.
- 5.3 Noted, Pat Harvey (PH) informed SF that no more than 1.5% of the overall funding can be deducted from special schools as they are protected under the minimum funding guarantee.
- 5.5 Noted, Annie Blackmore informed SF that she cannot support a cut of 2% across the board which targets the most vulnerable young people. DC responded saying that all other options have been explored and that this is the only option available.

- 5.6 The unintended consequences of the decision need to be investigated, models, forecast and options need to be brought to the June SF meeting. **Action DC/PH**
- 5.7 Noted, Annie Blackmore enquired as to whether post 16 top-up has been looked at as a potential way of re-balancing. PH responded saying that post 16 has been looked into and as they are a part of the HNB they will be subject to the 2% reduction. Colleges will be informed of decision.
- 5.8 Noted, RL asked for the following statement to be noted: -
 ‘This is potentially extremely damaging in the long term, we are very reluctantly coming to this decision and reiterate our strong demand for additional funding from the government to recognise the rapidly increasing numbers in Barking and Dagenham’.
- 5.9 Noted, GS stated that if the 2% cut reduces staffing it could potentially cost more if staff were made redundant. RL responded saying that this is a one-year reduction and would urge schools to hold staffing if at all possible.
- 5.10 SH asked that the impact be mapped out and reported back to June on what the payment to schools will be and the impact the 2% will have. **Action DC/PH**
- 5.11 Noted, Ronan Fox (RF) asked whether it would be advisable to have the modelling done before the cuts take place. PH responded saying that the £1.3m underspend needs to be actioned and three months of the new financial year would have been lost.
- 5.12 Noted, GS enquired what the position would be if the decision is not passed. PH responded saying that there will be clawbacks from school budgets at the start of the school year, whichever way it comes back to schools budgets. PH also stated that when budgets are top sliced, you must apply to the secretary of state and submit a recovery plan to ESFA, it's therefore better to manage the recovery in-house.
- 5.13 Noted, SH enquired as to whether it would be possible to put in a clause to cap the amount deducted so that no school has a significant loss.
- 5.14 **Decision:** Schools Forum are asked to agree to provisionally deduct 2% from all SEN top-up payments for 2018-19 only, subject to a full review of the HNB budgets before the June meeting and with a cap of no more than £40k on any individual school.
- 10 votes in favour
 1 vote against
 2 abstentions
- Agreed**

6. Update on Early Closure of accounts

- 6.1 Noted, the Schools Finance Team have received all Quarter 3 returns from Non-Oracle schools and are collating the draft outturn position based on these returns. Based on the initial indication and from the returns received, schools have used up £2.5m of their reserves.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting of the HNB Working Sub Group is 07 June 2018. It is suggested that members try and attend this meeting as the first item on the agenda for this meeting will be how to make savings

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Schools' Forum meeting will take place on Tuesday 19 June 2018 in Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Town Hall, 1 Town Square, Barking, IG11 7LU from 10:00am to 12:00pm.

Head teachers' pre-meeting will commence at 9.30am.